

Clarence:

Note

Confidential - For Discussion

A Suggested Program For The

National Society For Medical Research

For 1966-7

Philosophy Of The Program

You may be interested in what I am asking the Board of USMR to look at as to possible program items. We'll not be able to do it all, of course, but some items are very important, I think.

The future welfare of the American people -- indeed of all people everywhere -- is in jeopardy because of ignorance and misunderstandings concerning the conditions necessary for medical and other biological science adreance. The gravity of the situation is compounded by the existance of a powerful group of persons in the United States whose "mission" in life is to protect not only the real, but also the imagined "rights" of sub-human vertebrate animals. Playing upon the almost universal human instinct of kindness toward all domesticated animals these animal protectionists attempt to build sentiment to go far beyond appropriate measures to insure humane treatment of animals by dealers, and in housing and care in laboratories, into the area of control of scientific use itself. The older frank anti-vivisectionist movement, extending back a century or more, was a great threat to human welfare through scientific advance in the time before the miracles of medical and other biological science had demonstrated unequivocally the power of the experimental method in preventing and curing disease, and in raising the levels of human nutrition and general welfare. Today the outright anit-vivisectionist is discredited, but the sentiment remains and is expressed now in movements to impose strict legal controls over what it will be permissible to do in the way of pain-or-distress-producing procedures with sub-human vertebrates in scientific study.

The immediate problem of the biological science community is to give to the general public an understanding of the harm that would befall it if the current drive to take freedom of initiative in the design and execution of scientific experiments in medical and related fields out of the hands of the scientists themselves, should succeed. The point must be made that the harm would not be to scientists, but to scientific progress on which the public depends. It must also be made plain that the proposed regulatory procedures are in part really prohibitions rather than regulations and that frustration through bureaucratic red-tape can become a virtual prohibition.

A point which must be understood, if destructive legislation is to be averted, is that a cult of "reverence for life" has been growing in this country, partly out of the writings of the late Albert Schweitzer. The latter was humanistic mystic whose ascetic life as a doctor in equatorial Africa has had a fascination for many persons surfeited with the materialistic abundance and luxuries of the modern American scene. His philosophy has had a great appeal to many persons. He was not himself an anti-vivisectionist, but he had had no experience whatsoever with the scientific research aspects of medicine, and he advocated a system of legal control of animal research, comparable to the British law of 1876. He had no basis in experience for comprehension of the harm, relative to any good that could be done, by stifling initiative and freedom of action in the design and execution of experiments by bureaucratic red tape.

The Program in General

The themes of any effective program of public education concerning the necessity for freedom of judgment for working scientists to serve the public interest productively must be of at least two sorts. First, the public must be made aware of the great good that has come to its welfare through freedom of initiative in scientific research. Second, it must be convinced that scientific investigators do not in actuality inflict pain upon animals except when important information could not otherwise be obtained.

Certain practical realities must be recognized in any program of public education. The metropolitan mass media are not likely to want to carry much of this message as straight news. It is not news to report that Dr. X is not a sadist. It is news to report that medical schools engage in dog-napping, even if it is not true! News columns do not in general deal directly with such abstruse issues as the effects of conditions of freedom or restraint upon scientific progress. The informational effort of NSMR with metropolitan newspapers will probably have to be mainly through other than straight news reporting, except in so far as other mechanisms generate news as a side effect. Small town daily and weekly newspapers do use material sent to them, however.

A massive planned program of speaking before Clubs of all sorts, Church groups, School Convocations, Professional Societies, etc., would appear to be feasible, if properly organized. Likewise suggestions to science writers for newspapers and magazines would probably be productive of results if they could see the point of bringing in the important background features when they deal with specific cases. Some of the "opinion" magazines might present more fully reasoned expositions of the logic of the problem. Finally, the radio and TV might be brought into the program through their "documentary" or "public service" programs.

In addition to reaching the public, a special effort should be made to have every Congressman and State Legislator visit scientific laboratories. Further, every science writer should have similar opportunities.

Detailed Proposals

1. Speakers Kits

If large numbers of scientists are to be recruited for service as speaker, they will have to be assisted with source material and suggestions as to how to tie in the general theme of the entire program with the specifics about which they propose to talk.

In general it would be desirable for a speaker to talk at least in part about his own particular scientific work. Each Medical, Veterinary, Dental or other School or Research Institute could set up its own Speakers Bureau. Or some other mechanism, such as State Societies for Medical Research could be encouraged to do so. The NSMR should be able to provide the Bureau and speakers with various types of assistance, such as background literature, lantern slides, motion picture or video tape material, etc.

2. Inspection Tours By Congressmen And State Legislators

For its immediate effect on legislation probably the single most useful thing that the biomedical community could do would be to have every Senator and Representative in Congress given an early opportunity to see with his own eyes what goes on in well-run research laboratories in his own State or District. Expenses for travel should probably be paid out of appropriate funds. If a Congressional District has no biomedical laboratories then a neighboring District in the same State would be the next best, or perhaps a tour of the NIH, the Walter Reed Hospital or the NMRI would be appropriate. Most Congressmen have never been in a scientific laboratory and they listen to exaggerations or outright falsehoods with no basis for evaluation.

It would be most helpful if on each tour the Congressmen could be shown a Shock or Burn Treatment Unit in a Hospital, or in those properly equipped to do so,

a view of a major surgical operation through a viewing balcony.

They should also be given explanations of the purposes of various studies by the senior investigators.

The NSMR should promote and assist institutions in arranging these tours in suitable ways. The main responsibility, however, will obviously be that of the local institution. The Associations of Medical, Dental, Veterinary Medical, Agricultural and other Colleges would probably be willing to cooperate in this program. Some of the larger pharmaceutical laboratories would also be very suitable for visits, although the hospital application could not be shown. The Industry Advisory Committee should be consulted about this type of program. There might be important side benefits to the pharmaceutical industry in being able to show Congressmen the full story about how new drugs are evaluated, about which there is now great confusion in the public mind.

3. Special Regional Programs For Science Writers

A one day session should be set up in some appropriately equipped institution in each of several large areas of the country to which newspaper science writers in that area would be invited, perhaps with expenses for travel paid, to visit animal housing facilities, and actual animal research laboratories with work in progress, and to be shown some application of the animal research to an actual clinical problem in a hospital. The institutions chosen should be ones in which some generally recognized important clinical application had been developed. Open heart surgery, blood vessel transplants, lung surgery, shock or burn treatment, drug treatment of psychosis after visiting a psycho-pharmacology laboratory, are examples of clinical material which might be used. These programs would have to be very well-planned and institutions selected for the importance of the work going on and for the capacity of the scientists to explain their work lucidly.

4. Special Press Releases On Scientific Advances Depending Upon Animal Experimentation

Newspapers which do not have science writers, especially small town and suburban papers, make considerable use of material sent to them from responsible sources. A program might be developed of sending short informative stories on biomedical advances, bringing in the role of animals in the work. I would suggest approaching the editors of the JAMA, Modern Medicine, Medical World News, Medical Tribune, for example, to ask their assistance in identifying newsworthy items for this purpose, preferably at such an early date that the release of material to newspapers could come at the time of issuance of the source journal. The main point would be the rewrite of the statement so that the role of animal experimentation became clear to the layman.

5. Approaches to Various Types of Magazines, to Radio and TV

This field is very large and diffuse. An approach has already been made to the Scientific American and the editor is sympathetic to the idea. Other editors and program directors may require more information and persuasion. Nevertheless the NSMR must move vigorously and soon into this field.

Some major magazine would almost certainly take a paper by a prominent British expatriate who would criticize the Act of 1876, for example. Dr. Ian Bush would be a good person to do this. He has already given us a manuscript which could be the basis for an article.

Another area for development would be to induce medical scientists either to write up the stories of their own research accomplishments utilizing animals which have led to practical advances, and submit them to appropriate magazine outlets, or to agree to appear on TV programs presenting such stories.

Still another device would be to stimulate radio and TV debates between senior scientists, who would be well-briefed on the issues, and proponents of the Clark or Rogers types of bills. This type of approach must be used very cautiously because our opposition will use proponents of the British system, and there are several such in the U. S., and although there are many former British scientists here who will contest their position, relatively few of them are well-known. Americans who have had experience in British laboratories, like Albert Sabin, may be more effective.

In such debates the scientist should probably make the positive advocacy of S3332 his or her major theme and put the opposition at the disadvantage of having to discredit that bill.

6. Enlistment of Non-Scientists

(a) Variety Clubs

These organizations support medical research very generously in several American cities. They have fund drives and use "shorts" in motion picture theaters to promote them. They might be induced to include our educational theme in such shorts if we were able to get prominent medical scientists to devote their time and talents to their preparation.

(b) Stars of Stage, Screen and TV

Several well-known figures in the theater could probably be brought into television programs presenting medical advances, especially persons who have had major illnesses themselves or in their families, and have had benefits from animal research. Arthur Godfrey comes to mind as a possibility, because lung surgery has benefitted from animal experimentation.

(c) American Legion, VFW, DAV, etc.

Attacks have been made in the Congressional Hearings on Research Laboratories in VA Hospitals, and organizations of veterans are already concerned about the possible deleterious effects on the quality of their medical care. A veteran's lobby in Congress would be extremely effective, if it could be organized.

Further, these organizations have house organs going to members, which would probably accept suitable written material. VA Hospital physicians and surgeons might be asked to prepare such articles, with help from NSMR.

(d) Farmers Cooperatives, Farm Bureau, etc.

Farmers are particularly vulnerable to Humane Society goals. Ordinary farm practices relating to castration, branding, de-horning, egg-machines (so-called), and many others are obvious next targets of humane group action. Farmers have other reasons for wanting biological research to be unhampered. Particularly, they are concerned with veterinary medicine and animal husbandry advances. Their leaders have already been alerted to the problem by us and would undoubtedly arrange for publication of appropriate material in their House Organs, going to hundreds of thousands of homes.

(e) Labor Unions

Health benefits are standard parts of fringe benefits in labor contracts today and many Unions operate Health Plans. Conversations recently with a Vice-President (Mr. Gibbons) of one of the largest Unions indicate that they would cooperate in informational programs, employing Labor papers.

(f) Sportsmen

A little "research" on the subject would show that organizations like HSUS already have hunting, trapping and fishing on their agenda for future action. It would not hurt to let them know that this is the case.

(g) Churches

All orthodox Christian churches hold that lower animals may properly be used in humane ways in the service of man. In general the clergy has been strongly opposed to anti-vivisection agitation. What position it will take on the score of Federal regulation of actual research procedures is hard to predict, but nevertheless it would appear to be desirable to get the entire subject discussed dispassionately in various religious publications. If our position is as sound as we think it is such a discussion should produce a favorable effect. However, it may be predicted with confidence that some editors will take positions contrary to our own. The Christian Science Monitor and the Christian Register have already indicated such views. Any proposed writing for such journals should be done by persons who can deal effectively with the finer points by logic in the ethical field.

(h) The Voluntary Health Agencies

These agencies can be the most effective instruments for public education. Their entire purpose would be hampered to the point of frustration if legislation that would frustrate individual initiative in experimental design and execution were to be enacted.

The NSMR should cooperate with these agencies by supplying the types of printed material, video tapes, lantern slides, etc., that they can use.

(i) Hospitals

The American Hospital Association and other Hospital Associations could be useful agencies in public education. Actually, relatively poor conditions in many hospital laboratories have been responsible for poor publicity. However, the hospitals could help greatly in public education if their Boards became informed and interested and if they were to publicize the achievements of animal research in their institutions.